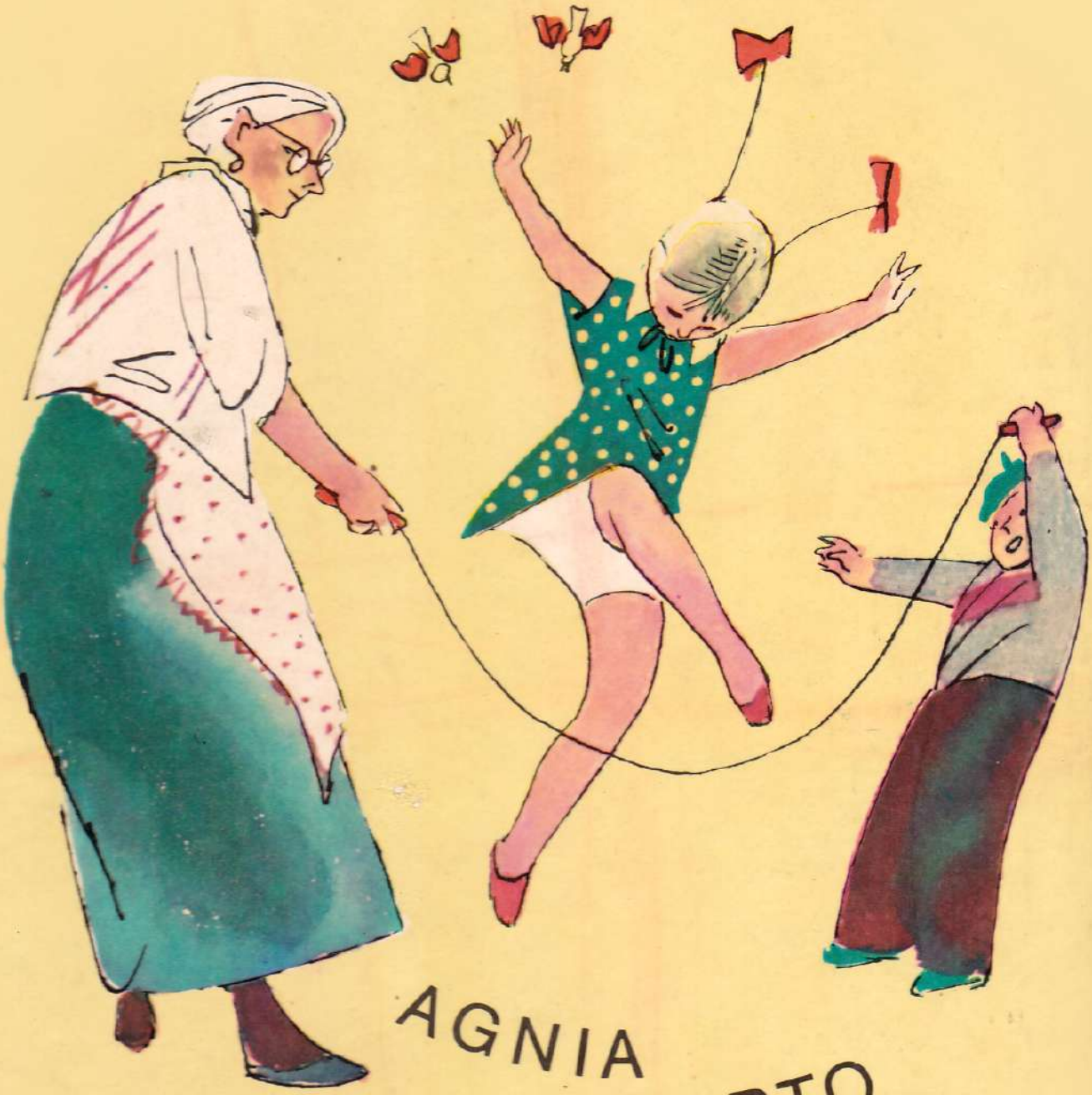

AGNIA BARTO

Merry Rhymes

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Merry Rhymes

DRAWINGS BY V. GORYAYEV

TRANSLATED FROM THE RUSSIAN

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CONTENTS

	Page
TOYS	5
BABY BROTHER	15
TWO SISTERS LOOKING AT BABY BROTHER	15
THE TERRIBLE BIRD	16
THE RATTLE	17
SVETA THINKS	18
SHOES	19
MASHA	21
MY BALL	25
HOW VOVA CHANGED HIS WAYS	26
KNITTING	28
MUMMY'S LITTLE HELPER	30
THE ANGLER	31
THE BULLFINCH	33
MY SEA-SHELL	36
THE LANTERN	37
PLAYING AT CATTLE	38
THEY WENT AWAY	41
SPOT THE WATCH-DOG	42
THE DEFENDER	43
FOUR AND FORTY GRANDCHILDREN	44
THE PAINTER	46
THE SKIPPING-ROPE	48
I'M A BIG GIRL NOW	53
TO SCHOOL	54
ARITHMETIC	56
THE DOORBELL	58
THE CROQUET PLAYERS	60
THE CHATTERBOX	62
AUNTIE'S COUNTRY-HOUSE	64
THE SWINGS	69
THE BAD LITTLE BEAR-CUB	71

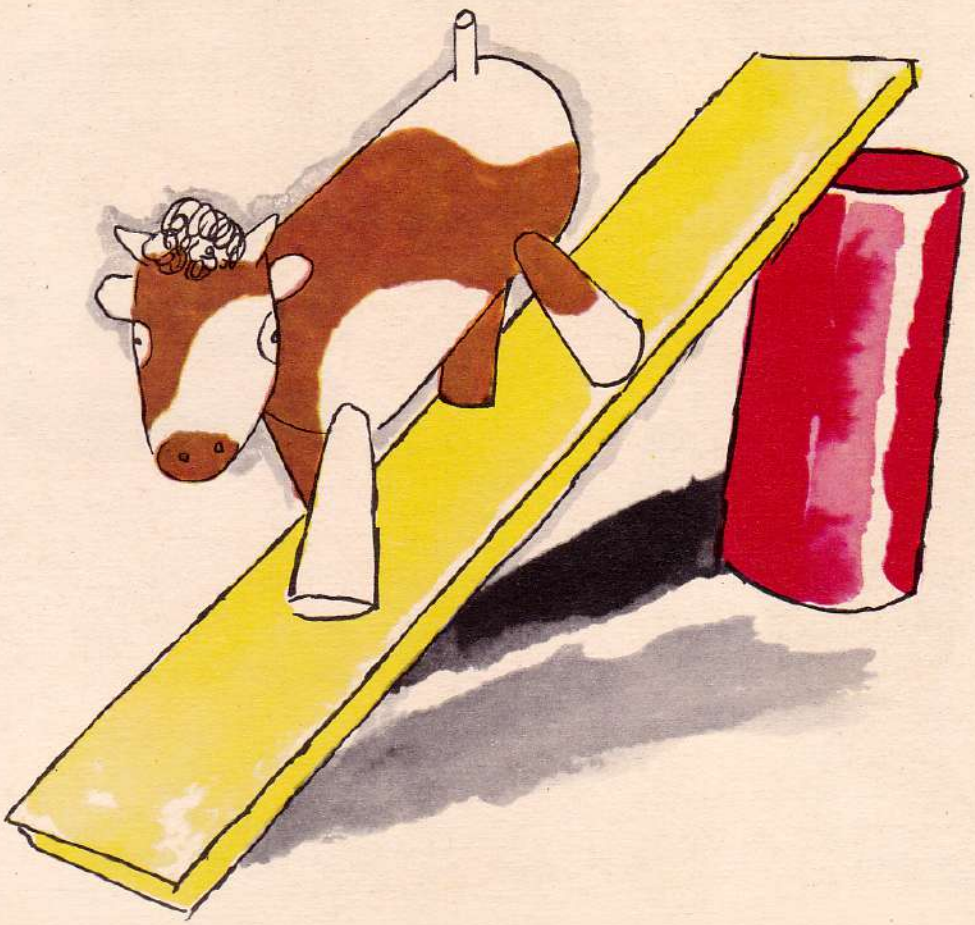
TOYS

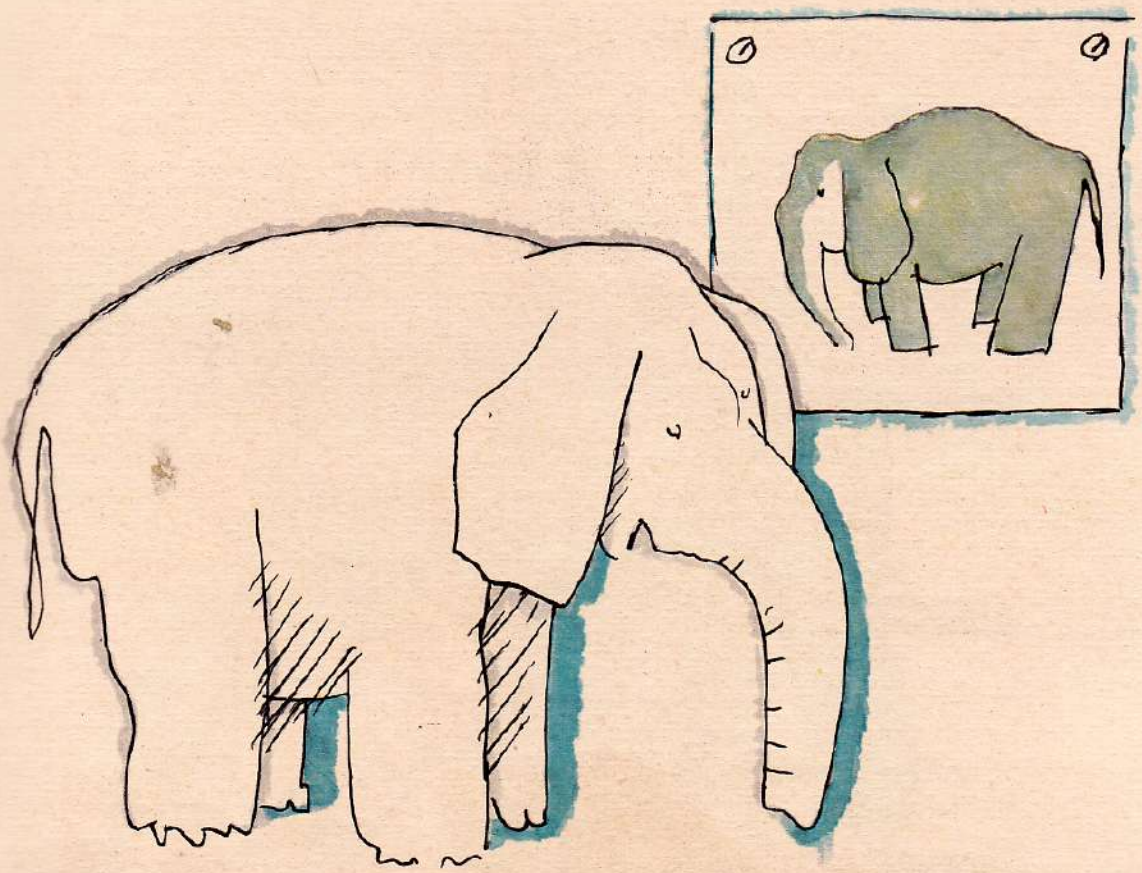
TEDDY

On the floor lies Tiny Teddy,
Half a paw is gone already.
He is tattered, torn, and lame,
Yet I love him just the same.

THE WOODEN BULL-CALF

The Bull-Calf walks with shaking knees.
The funny thing's so small!
The board is ending soon, he sees,
And he's afraid to fall.



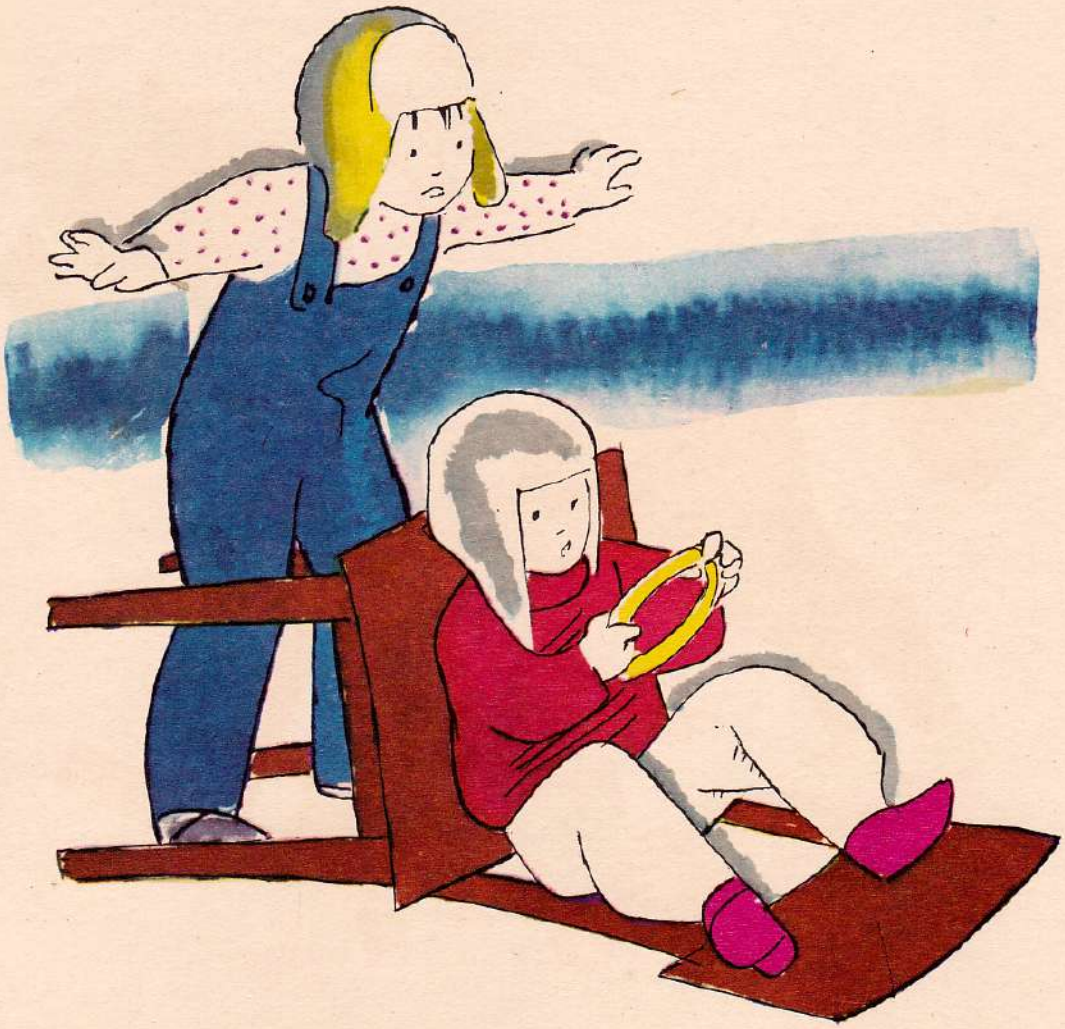


THE ELEPHANT

Time for bed! The Calf's asleep,
In his basket, snug and deep.

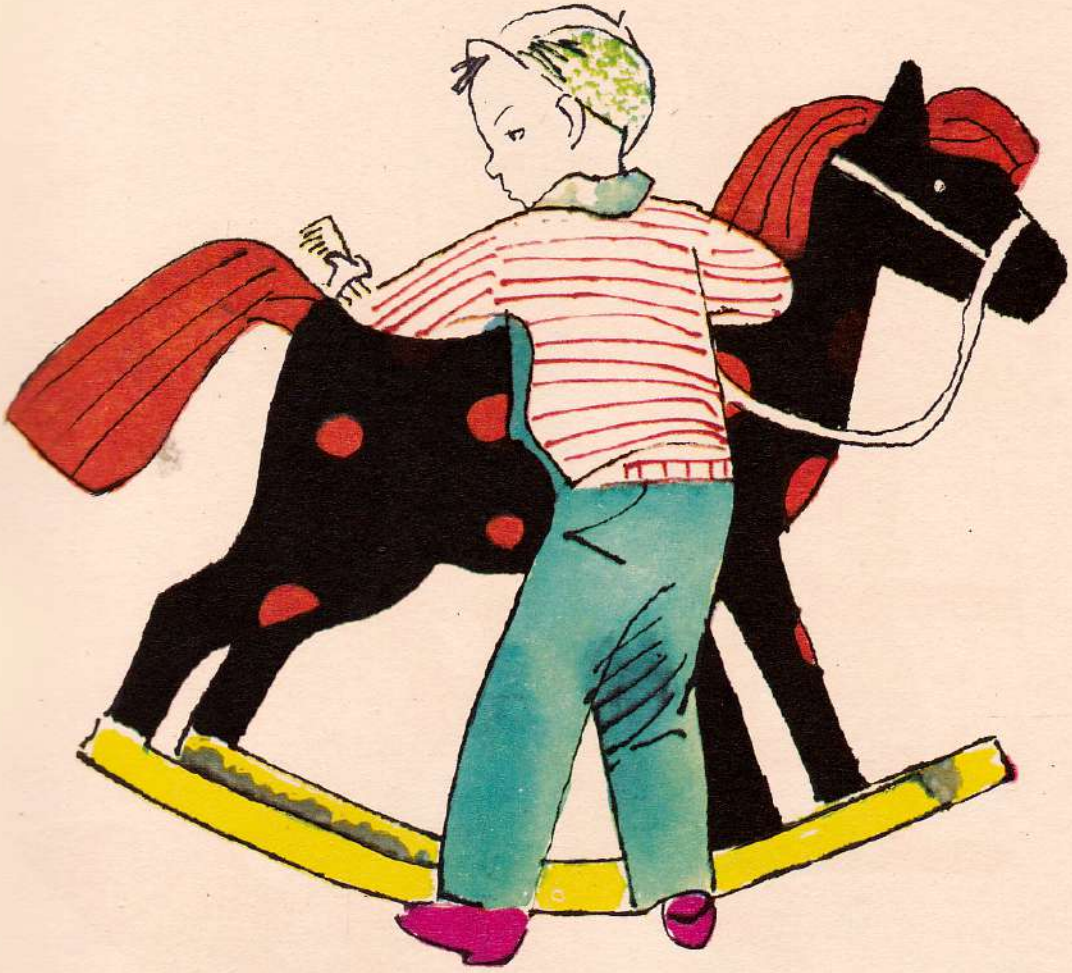
Teddy's sleeping in his cot,
But the Elephant is not.

He nods his head and looks askant
At the Lady Elephant.



THE AEROPLANE

We will build a plane and soar
Over woodland, sea, and shore,
Over woodland, sea, and shore,
And fly back to Mum once more.

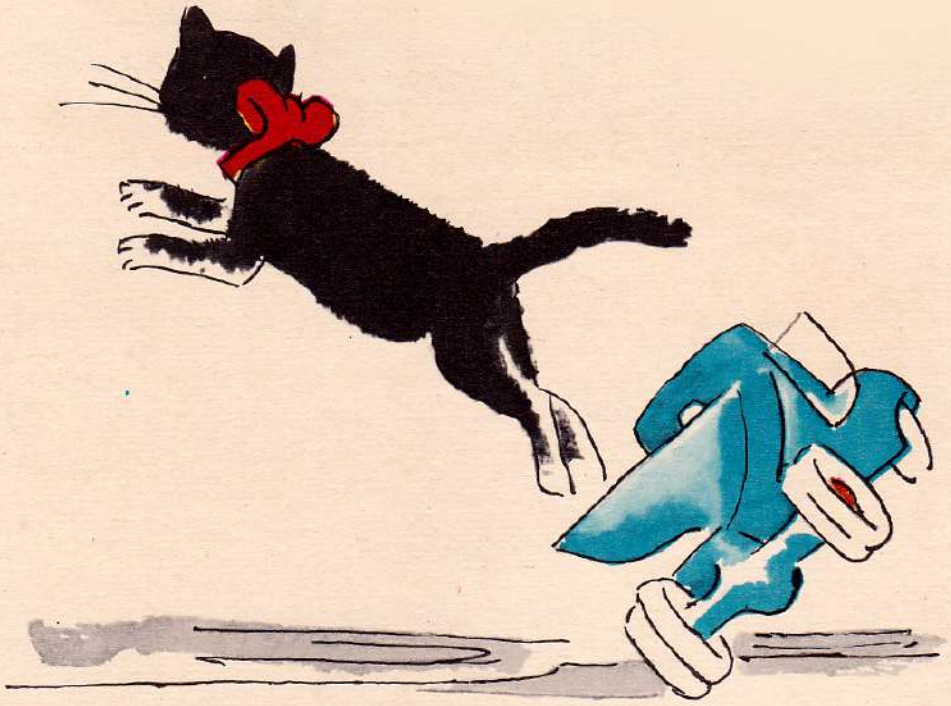


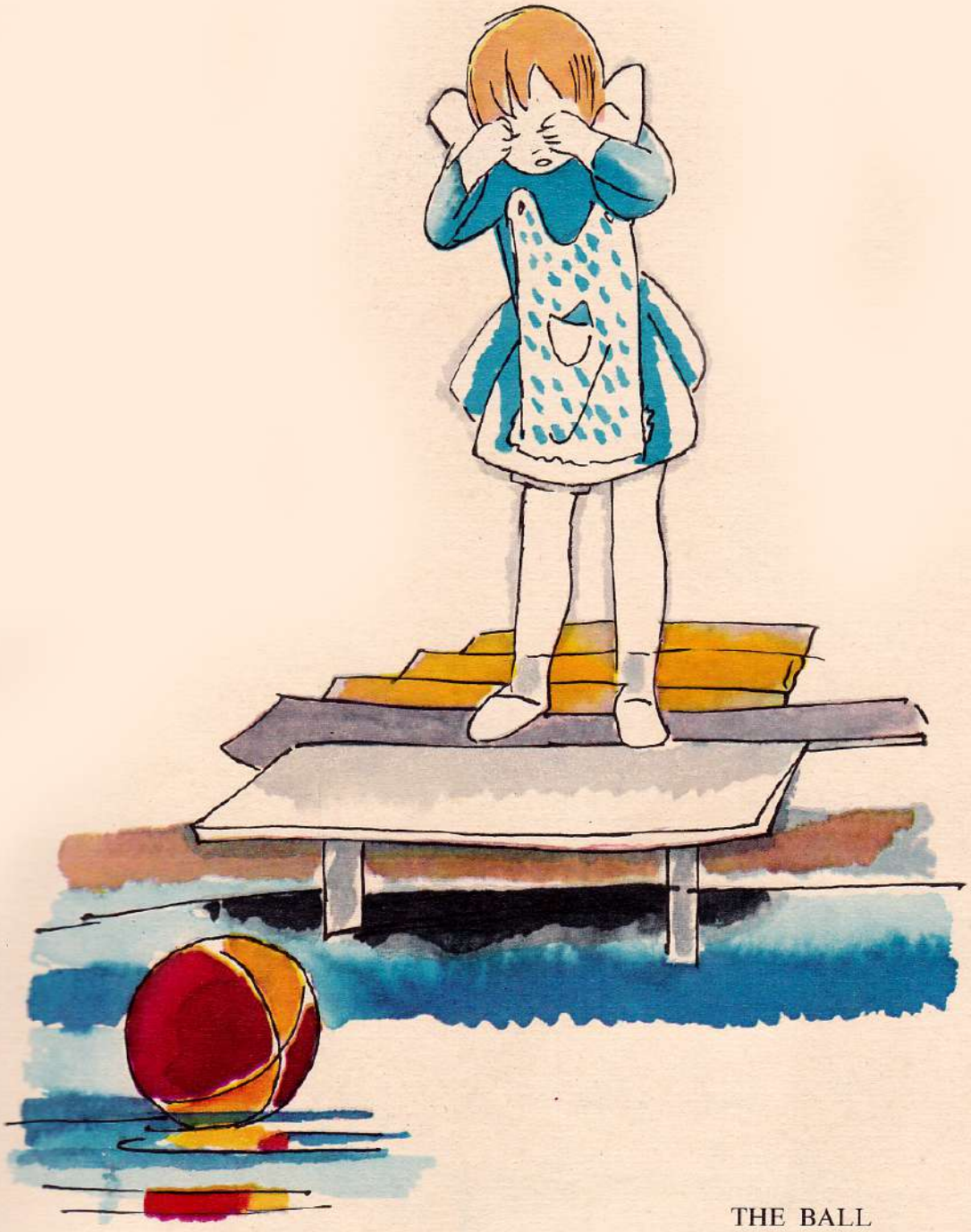
MY HORSE

How I love my little Horse!
I will brush him well, of course,
I will comb his tail and mane,
And go riding out again.

THE LORRY

Now we all are very sorry:
We put Pussy in the lorry;
Pussy didn't like the ride—
Lo! The lorry's on its side.



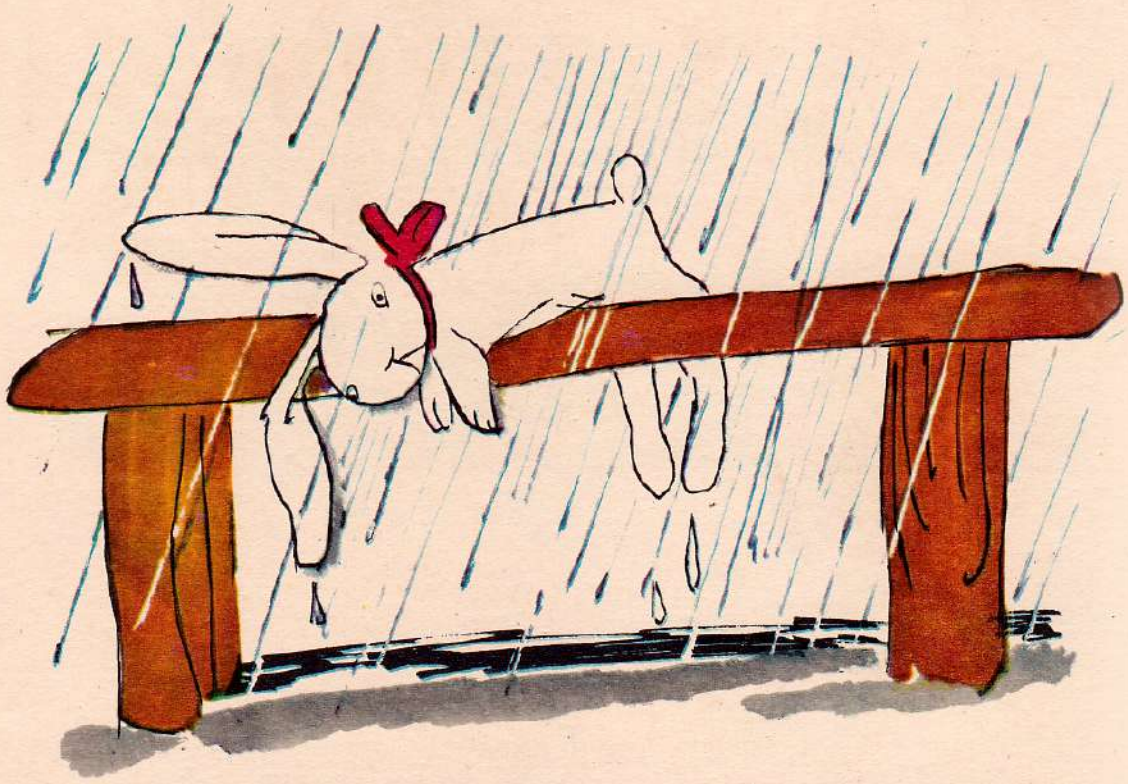


THE BALL

Little Tanya's sadly sobbing,
On the waves her ball is bobbing.
Do not cry your eyes out so:
Rubber balls don't drown, you know.

BUNNY

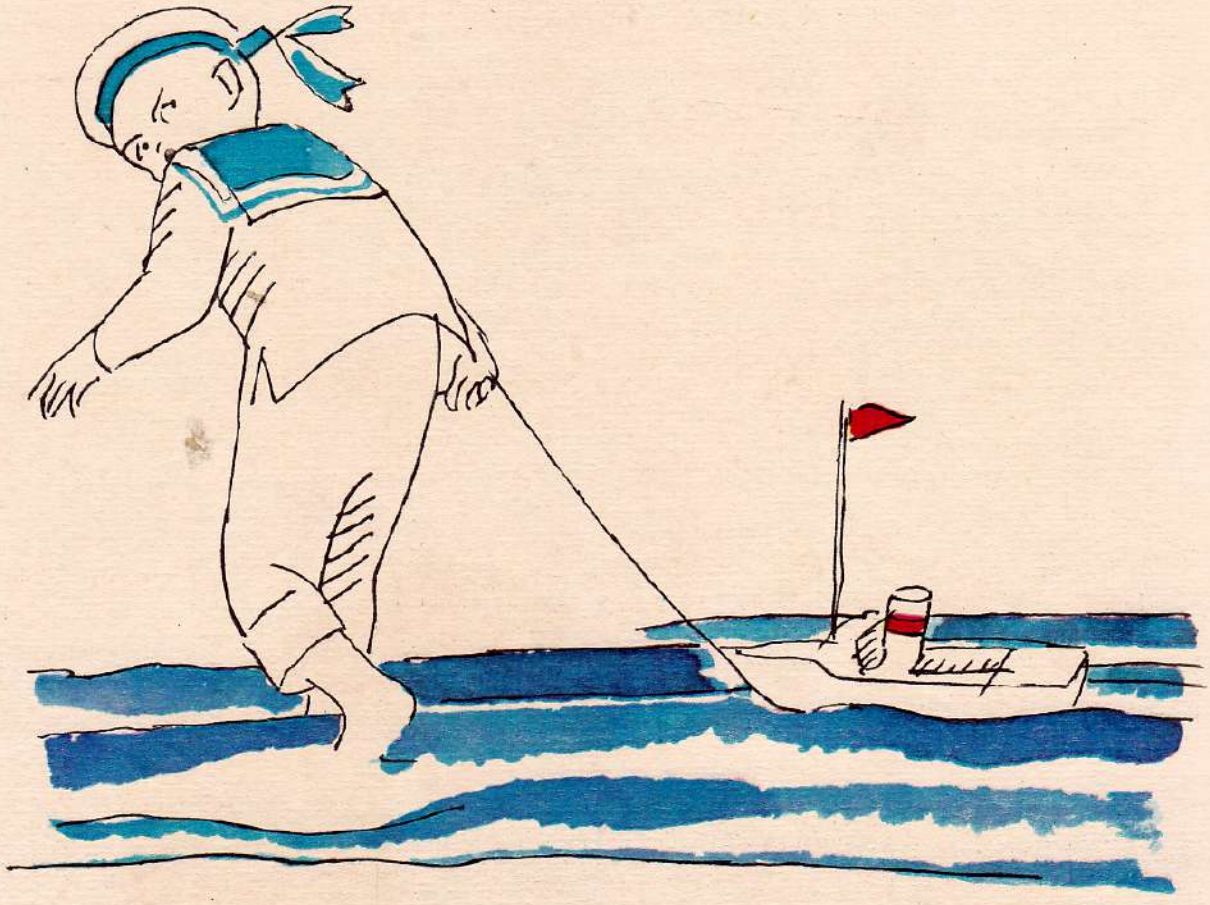
Once a little scatter-brain
Left poor Bunny in the rain.
What could little Bunny do?
He got wet just through and through.



MY BILLY-GOAT

With my Goat, so small and funny,
I go walking every day.
In our garden, green and sunny,
I and Billy love to play.

Should my little Billy stray,
I will find him straightaway.



THE SAIL-BOAT

A cap like a sailor's,
A string in my hand,
I'm sailing my sail-boat
Away from the land.
The frogs croak in chorus,
As they leap aside,
"Ahoy, Little Skipper!
Please give us a ride!"

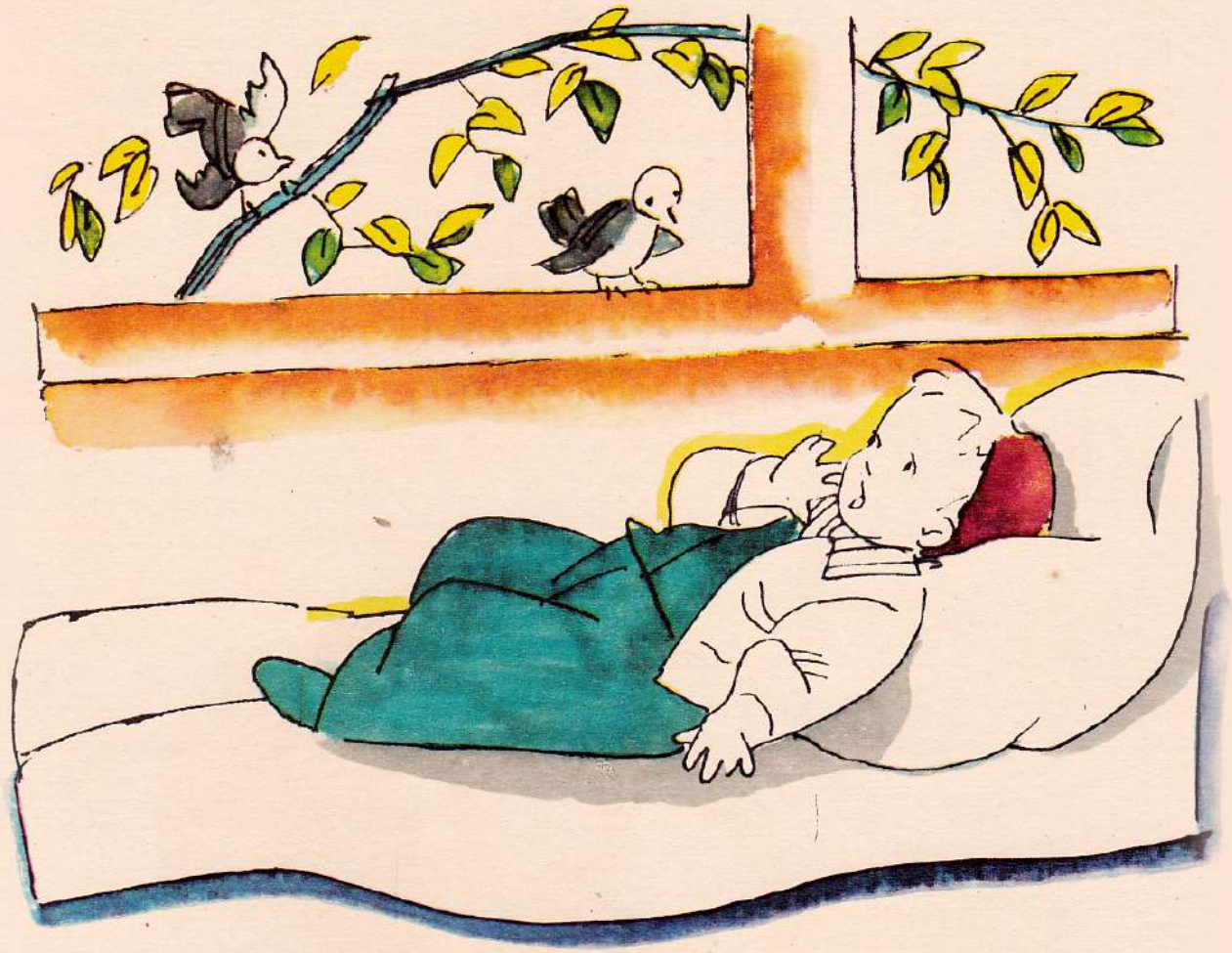
Translated by
Dorian Rottenberg

BABY BROTHER

TWO SISTERS LOOKING AT BABY BROTHER

Two sisters looked at Baby Brother.
"How helpless! Look, how weak! How small!
See! He can twitch his brows together
But he cannot smile at all."

Baby Brother woke and sneezed.
"How fast they grow, these little boys,"
The sisters chorused, very pleased.
"That sneeze made quite a grown-up noise."



THE TERRIBLE BIRD

A bird alighted on the sill,
All fluffy feathers, fierce, strong bill.
Baby Brother got a fright,
Screwed his tiny eyes up tight,

Called his sisters, called his mother—
No one came to Baby Brother.

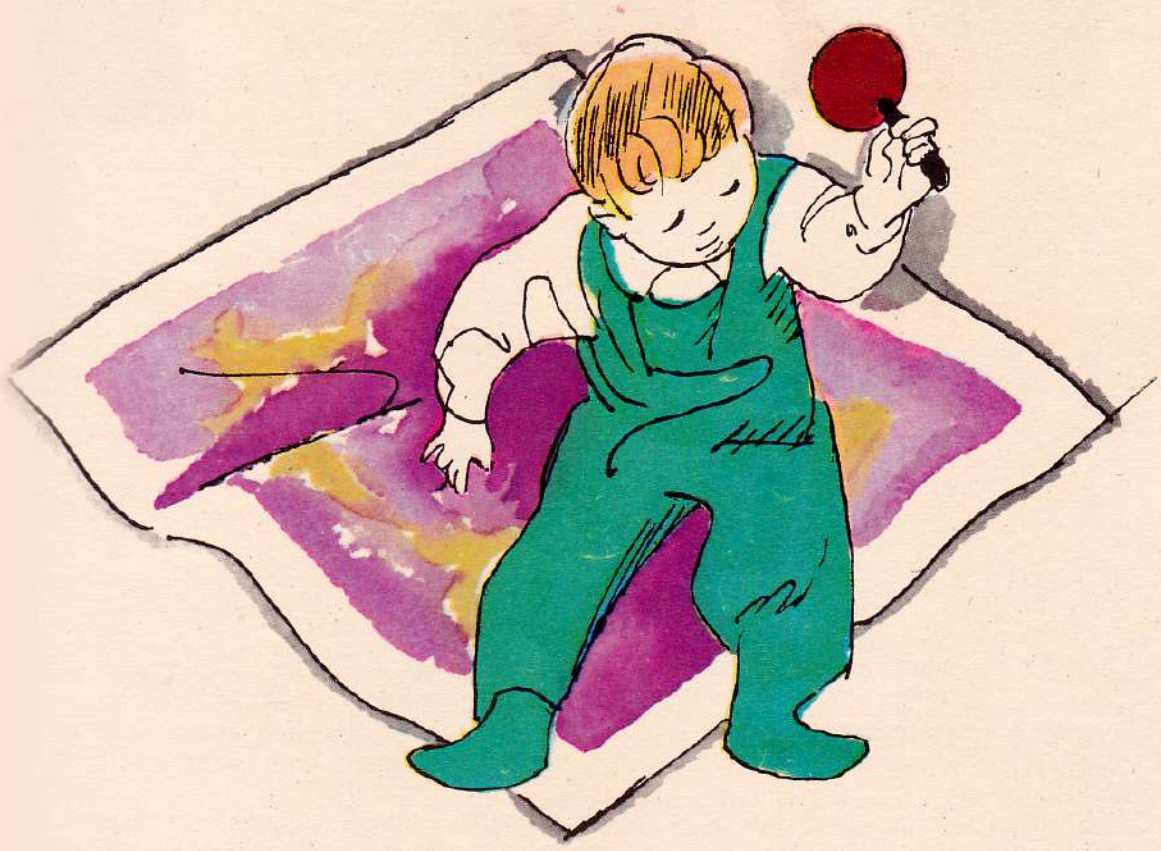
"What can this monstrous creature be?"
He thought: "This is the end of me!"

Then: "What's the matter, little fellow?
That bird? Why, it's just a sparrow
Come to take a friendly peep
At our little boy asleep!"

THE RATTLE

Nikita sit like a big boy
On a play-rug in the garden....
In his hand he waves a toy,
A rattle with bright bells on....

Now he hearkens in surprise,
Now stares in wonder blinking,
Can't believe his ears or eyes:
What makes that pretty tinkling?



SVETA THINKS

The sun has risen, the garden glistens,
The dewdrops are fire-bright.
Sveta, one of Nikita's sisters,
Thinks, in a sudden fright:

"What if, from his pram, he sees all we do?
Look, the curtains are blowing wide!
What if he's lying there, gazing through
At all that goes on outside?...

If we climb the fence or leave out a book
Or over the flower beds trample—
Our Baby Brother may take a look
And follow his sister's example!"

So Sveta said sternly: "Listen, you!
If you saw us quarrelling yesterday
You are *not* to do as your sisters do
When you grow up to be a big boy."

SHOES

Nikita's new shoes are just right!
Not too loose—and not too tight!

We have put them on for him—
We think he thinks they are a toy,
He will not try to walk in them,
Just stands and stares for joy.

Then, with deliberate precision,
Admires his latest acquisition:
Pulls the laces, strokes the soles,
Pokes his fingers in the holes.

There! He's sitting down—oh dear!
He's trying one shoe with his tongue....
Ups-a-daisy! Now all's clear.
For your first step, my son!

Translated by
Avril Pyman

MASHA

Who is sleeping here,
Please say?
Who gets up
At the break of day?
Why, it's Masha in her bed!
She has lifted up her head.
Pulling blanket off, and sheet,
She stands up upon her feet.

* * *

No, this isn't just a room:
It's the biggest land you've seen.
Here two giant sofas loom;
There a field—the carpet green.

* * *

Masha took the looking-glass,
And she peeped inside.
She could scarce believe her eyes.
"Who is that?" she cried.

When she reached the chair,
She stood a little there.
And to the table then
She toddled off again.

* * *

We will draw a garden—so,
Where a lot of currants grow.
On one bush are currants black,
On another, currants red.
All the black belong to Jack,
All the red belong to Ted.

* * *

All day long, the Goldfinch sings,
In a cage upon the sill.
Though he's almost three years old,
He's afraid of Pussy still.

But Masha isn't frightened
Of Goldfinch or of Cat.
She gave the bird some water
And told the Cat to scat.

* * *

All the lassies, in a ring,
Stood as still as still could be.
Father Winter lit the lights
On the great big New Year's tree.

On the top, a star,
Beads, row upon row;
Don't put out the lights:
May they always glow!

The clock has just struck eight,
The house will soon be still,
We'll cover with a cloth
The cage upon the sill.

Now, Masha has a Daughter;
She's getting on for two.
You'll never hear her crying:
She sleeps the whole night through.

Shadows glide upon the wall,
Like huge jungle beasts they prowl.
In her sleep, the mother Cat
At her Kits is heard to growl.

We go to bed quite early
And draw the curtains tight.
The giant sofas stand there,
Like mountains in the night....

Lulla-lulla-lulla-by,
Sleep, my Masha, do not cry.

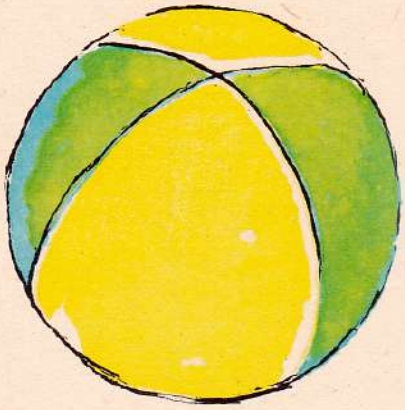
Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

MY BALL

To the green field at morning
With my ball I rush out
Springing and singing
Don't know what about....

The ball rises blazing
High over my head,
As bright as the sunshine,
A rich golden red—
Then, spinning and turning,
Gleams grass-green instead.

Translated by
Avril Pyman



HOW VOVA CHANGED HIS WAYS

Vova was a little bear,
All he did was sulk and stare,
Sulk and stare and frown and brood,
Which, you see, is very rude.

When we told him, "Don't be glum!"
He would glare and bite his thumb.
When we told him, "Come and play!"
He would pout and turn away.

When we offered him our ball,
He would not reply at all.

Vova's stares and Vova's sneers
Nearly drove us all to tears,
And we thought and thought for days
How to make him change his ways.

One fine morning, frowning hard,
Out we came into the yard.
Out we came, as was agreed,
Very long of face indeed.

As for Baby Lyuba, she
Looked as sore as sore can be.

"Vova, watch!" we called to him,
"Aren't we looking awful grim?"
"Vova, watch!" we called again,
"And you'll see why we complain."

Vova, clearly at a loss,
Tries to show that he was cross,
But we made so droll a sight
That instead he laughed outright.

"Say," he asked, and down he sat,
"Do I look as bad as that?"
But before we had replied,
He was laughing till he cried.

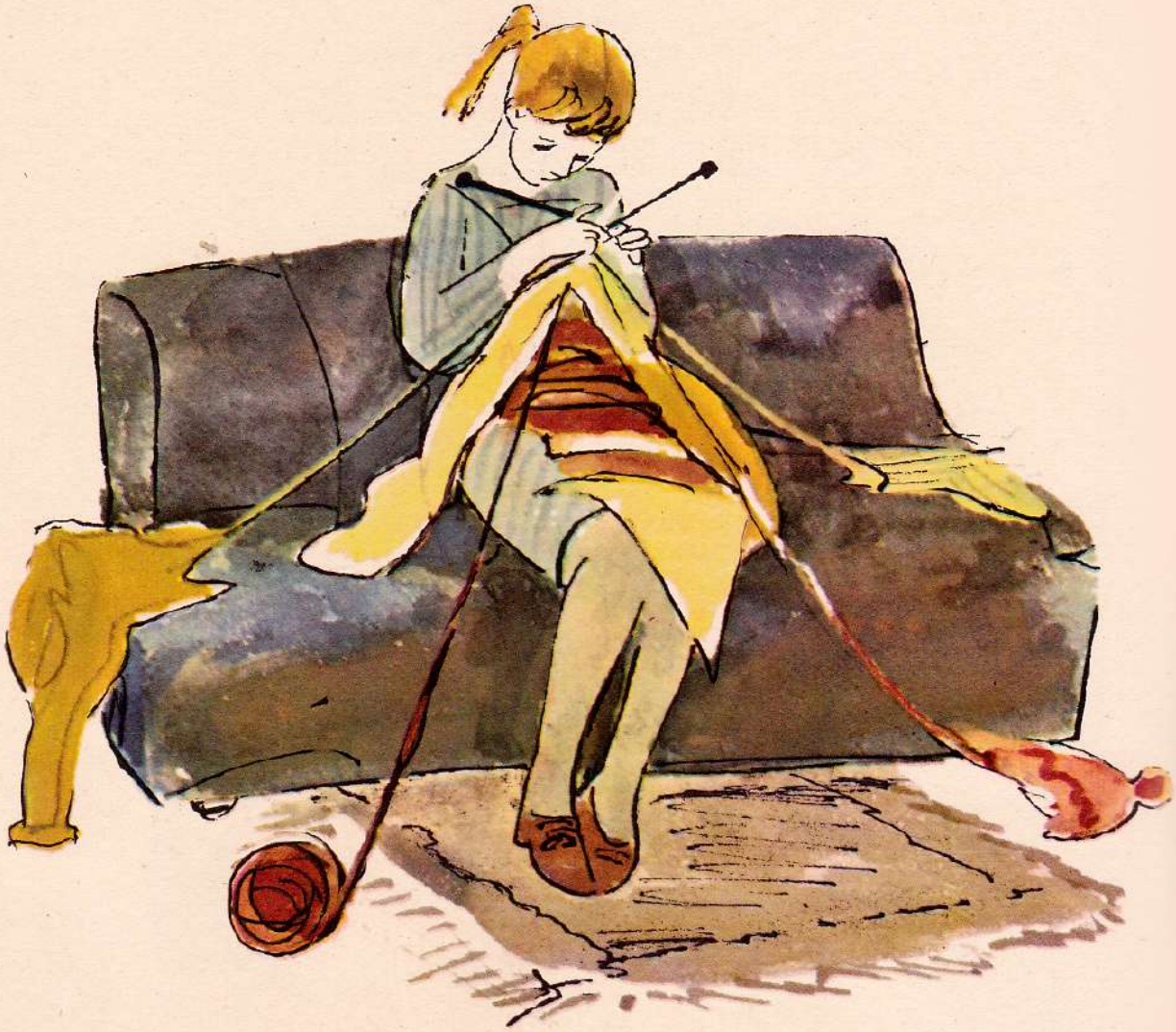
"Watch!" said we, and with a sigh
Made a face so very wry
That he begged for us to stop,
Saying he was fit to drop.

Now to our relief and joy,
Vova is a different boy:
Always happy, always gay,
Always glad to join in play.
No one sees him frown or stare,
No one ever calls him Bear.

And if he begins to pout,
With a laugh we call, "Look out!"
Brought up short, he makes no fuss,
Only grins, and laughs with us.

Translated by
Irina Zheleznova

KNITTING



My uncommon sister Ann
Knits at any time she can.
Even when she goes to bed
She puts her knitting by her head.
In the darkness she will sit
On her bed and start to knit.

My uncommon sister Ann
Knits at any time she can.
She will rather knit than eat,
Folk like her you seldom meet.

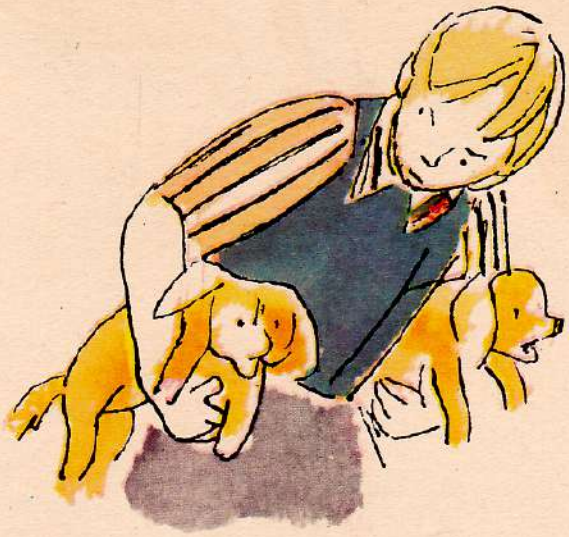
If she sees her yarn is ending,
Our big wardrobe she unlocks,
Into separate pieces rending
All the woolen scarves and socks.

Grandmamma comes home from town.
"Where's that woolen dressing-gown?"
Frocks, pull-overs, jumpers, caps—
All the house is pulled to scraps.

Where my wooly pups lie sleeping
By the wicket in the sun,
There my sister Ann is peeping,
All her wool already spun!

I must put my pups away,
Or they'll come to woe this day!
She will spin them, one and all,
Into one big fluffy ball,
And, without a word to me,
Knit them into gloves, you'll see!

Translated by
Dorian Rottenberg



MUMMY'S LITTLE HELPER

Little Tanya's very busy:
She is helping all the day.
When her brother's eating sweetmeats,
Tanya helps him straightaway.

Eating, drinking tea, and resting,
All are things that she must do.
First she'll sit a while near Mummy,
Then she'll sit near Granny, too.

And before she went to bed,
To her Mummy Tanya said:
"I'm too tired to undress,
But I'll help tomorrow, yes."

Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

THE ANGLER

Each morning on the lake you'll see
An angler. All day long
He sits and hums a melody,
A wordless little song.

This melody, so wonderful,
Of joy and grief does tell;
But in the lake the fishes all
Have learnt his song full well,
And when that angler's song they hear,
The fishes simply disappear.

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff

THE BULLFINCH

There's a bird-shop in our street
Which is always full of song.
Pigeons coo, canaries warble,
Finches whistle all day long.

In that bird-shop, in our street,
Many lovely birds they keep;
But I saw a certain bullfinch
That has robbed me of my sleep.

Now, his little breast was scarlet,
And his wings a shiny grey;
Not for even half a minute
Could I tear my eyes away.

And because of this same bullfinch,
I cried loud—when Mummy heard.
I was sure, she would take pity
And would let me have the bird.

But my Mummy doesn't answer—
It's a habit, I suppose,
When I ask about the bullfinch,
She begins about my clothes:

That I tore my shirt while fighting,
That my shoes are soaking wet,
That for these and other reasons,
I can't have a bullfinch yet.

So I dogged my Mummy's footsteps,
Lay in ambush by the door,
And at dinner-time, on purpose,
Spoke about the bird once more.

If she wished, I wore galoshes,
Even though the streets were dry.
And I was so good, in general,
That you'd think I wasn't I.

With Papa I hardly argued,
And on doors I didn't swing.
Everybody I kept thanking
For each single, little thing.

Oh, how Mummy was astonished!
"Tell me, dear, are you all right?
This must be the second Sunday
That you haven't had a fight!"

And I sadly hung my head.
"I am being good," I said.

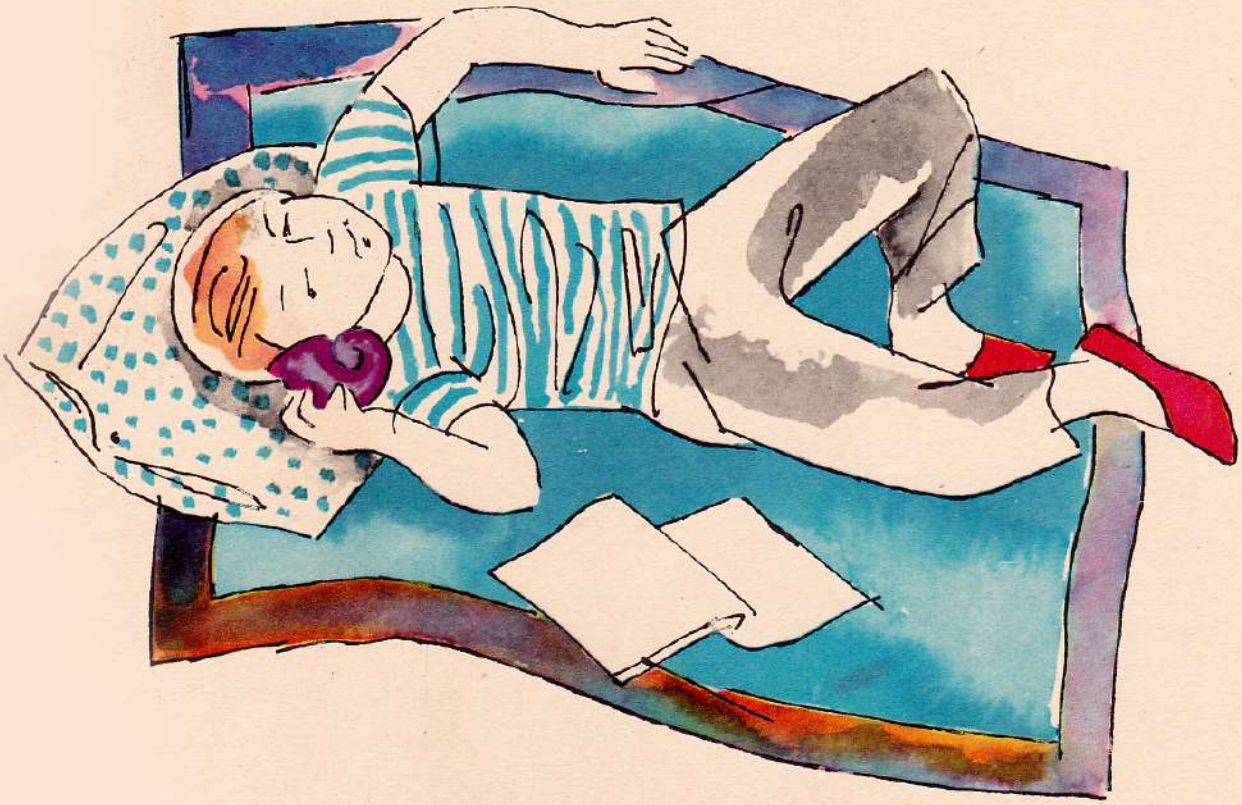
That I didn't try for nothing,
I am sure you must have heard.
"It's a wonder!" said my Mummy,
And she went and bought the bird.
When she brought it home to me,
I just sang and danced with glee;

And I called to all the neighbours:
"I've a real live bullfinch, see!"

I will love my little bullfinch,
He will sing from morn till night.
Now, perhaps, it will not matter,
If I have another fight?

Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

MY SEA-SHELL



My pretty little sea-shell—
I keep it safe and dry.
Yet once, down at the seashore,
In sand it used to lie.

My Granddad
From the Black Sea
Has given it to me;
And if you listen closely,
You'll hear in it the sea....

You'll hear in it the breakers,
The hissing of the foam,
And you will think the Black Sea
Has come into your home.

Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

THE LANTERN

I'm not lonely in the night,
For I have a magic light.
When you look at it by day,
You can't see a single ray,
But at night there can be seen
Teeny-weeny rays of green
For my light, you realise,
Is a jar of fire-flies.

Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

PLAYING AT CATTLE

Yesterday we played at cattle,
We had to make an awful racket,
We lowed and mooed just like a herd
And yelped like dogs and barked so loud
We didn't hear a single word
Our teacher said. She had to shout:

"Children, what *is* all this noise?"
She said, and raised her hand.
"I've seen many girls and boys,
But you—you beat the band!"
"There are no children here," we said,
"But only dogs and cows instead,
And cows don't understand, you know,
For they can only moo and low,

And cow-dogs have to bark all day
To keep the cows from going astray."

Then teacher came up with her plan:
"So you're a herd of cows? O.K.
That is a game that two can play.
If you're the cattle, I'm the man
Who drives you home," said teacher Ann.

Translated by
Avril Pyman

THEY WENT AWAY

With milk they fed him, sweet and white—
"Just see the way he grows!"
They tiptoed up to him at night
To see that everything was right,
To feel his tiny nose.

They loved to train their little pet,
They bustled all day long;
And Puppy, just a bit upset,
Walked with them on a thong.

He growled at strangers just the same
As any grown-up dog.
But then a motor lorry came,
And he was all agog.

He waited for the boys to play,
But they got in and rode away.

He was so used to campfires gay,
To bugle calls at break of day....
And so he barked with might and main,
That they might all come back again.

He was alone—so all alone
That he began to wail.

He spent an hour lying prone,
He didn't care for meat or bone,
He didn't wag his tail.

The boys, remembering at last,
Rode back without delay.
When to the camp house they ran fast,
He met them on their way.

To meet the boys, he ran apace,
He jumped and licked each youngster's face.
And as they stroked and hugged him tight,
He barked for joy with all his might.

Translated by
Evgeny Felgenhauer

SPOT THE WATCH-DOG

I'm tired of this loafing
and loitering, chum;
A watch-dog is what
I should like to become.

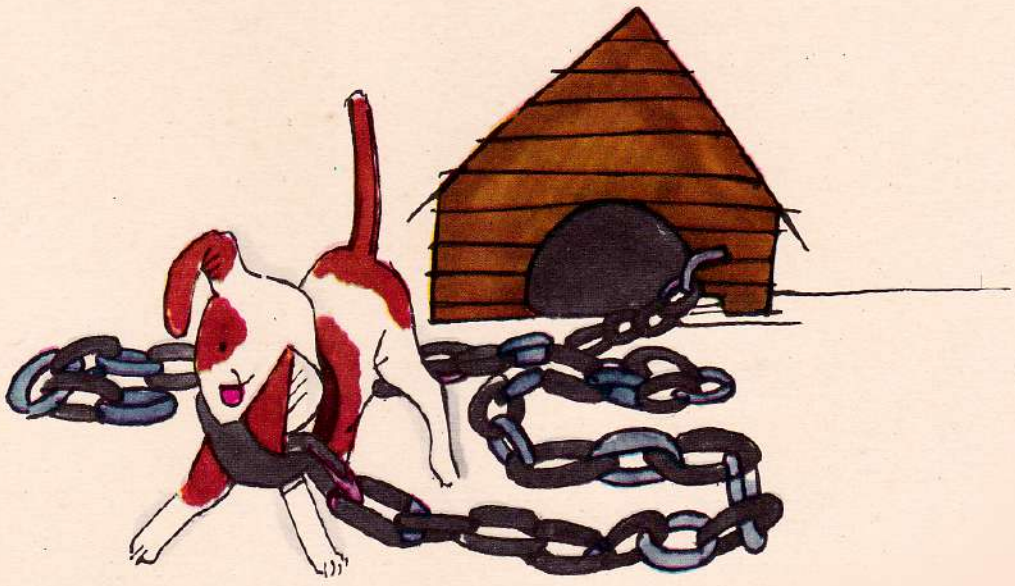
I've seen an advertisement
out in the yard:
A watch-dog is wanted
a garden to guard.

I'm a brave little puppy,
you know me all right.
If a cat comes my way,
she is in for a bite.

I can bark rather loud,
I can growl without end,
I can tell who's a stranger
and who is a friend.

All the kittens in town
are afraid of brave Spot.
Now, please tell me the truth:
is the job mine or not?

Translated by
Dorian Rottenberg



THE DEFENDER

Just try and bully her,
My sister Julia!
Firstly—I'm not a bad boxer....
Second—I love her, see?
Thirdly—if anyone socks her
It's going to be me!

Translated by
Avril Pyman

FOUR AND FORTY GRANDCHILDREN

Came the dandy dandelion,
Came to stay
In Granny's kitchen garden,
Lack-the-day!

Granny gasped:
"Bless me!
Where be
The strawb'ries?

I'll fight the dandy dandelion,
I know what I'm about.
My four and forty grandchildren
Shall come to dig him out."

Came the four and forty,
Rolling up their sleeves:
Made a mighty sortie
On the wicked weeds.
Stubbornly they clung
But out they had to come!

Granny gasped:
"Bless me!
Children—well done!
Only
Where's strawb'ries?
I don't see
ONE."

Translated by
Avril Pyman

THE PAINTER

Gran'dad and I rose early
To paint the garden-shed.
The sky was pale and pearly.
"Now take it slow," he said.

"First you scrape the walls—don't rush!—
Then you'll be free to wield your brush."

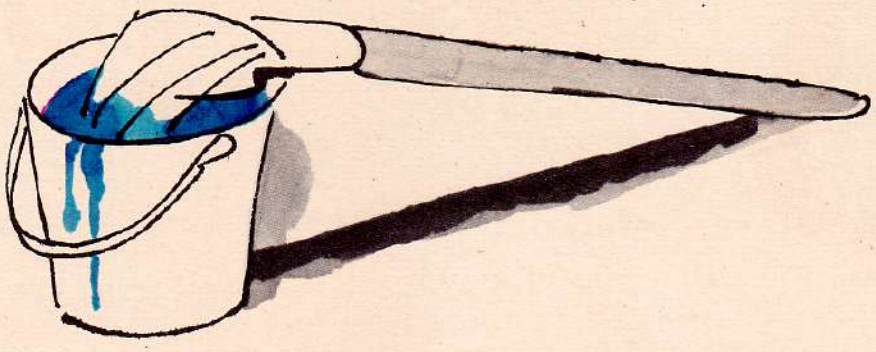
So up and down and to and fro
My laden paint-brush flew.
We worked away like billy-ho,
The shed looked good as new.

And when at last the work was done
And Gran'dad stowed his tools away,
I thought it would be super fun
To go out painting every day.

To have a hundred different pots
And splash them round without restraint,
To colour everything we've got:
That's how I'd like to paint....

Look, there's a drop left in the pail,
A tiny little scraping!
I'll get up early without fail
To do a bit more painting.

Translated by
Avril Pyman



THE SKIPPING-ROPE

It's spring, it's spring-time in the air!
Spring days have come along!
The tinkling tram-bells sound like birds
Just breaking into song.

Alive with noisy merriment
Our Moscow is today.
The leaves on trees aren't dusty yet,
But sticky, fresh, and gay.

The rooks are cawing in the trees,
The lorries rumble past.
It's spring, it's spring-time in the street,
Spring days have come at last!

As you walk out into our street,
Take care, be sure to watch your feet!
"One-two-three-four-five-six-seven!"
Girls' voices ring as small feet beat.

It's the children from our yard,
It is they your way have barred—
Little champions in skipping,
Skipping, tripping fast and hard.

In the boulevards and gardens
And in every yard and street,
You can hear these merry youngsters,
You can watch their nimble feet,
Spinning, turning,
Skipping, hopping,
Rarely resting,
Seldom stopping.

Little Lida, full of hope,
Comes and takes the skipping-rope.

All the other little girls
Gaily go on skipping—
Why then cannot Lida's hands
Keep the rope from slipping?

"Lida, Lida, you're too small!"
"Lida cannot skip at all!"
"Lida's just a little baby!"
"Let her stop, or she will fall!"

In the corridor next morning
Tiny feet began to stamp,
And the noise awoke a neighbour
Who began to scold the scamp.

He was very, very angry,
More than he had ever been.
"Who is stamping there so early?
What can all this stamping mean?"

Turning, spinning,
Skipping, hopping,
Rarely resting, seldom stopping,
On the spot
And at a run—
Skipping is such jolly fun!
Skipping all along the street,
All the records Lida beats.

Lida's Granny got up also—
"Anyway, it's time to rise."
It was all that little Lida
Having skipping exercise.

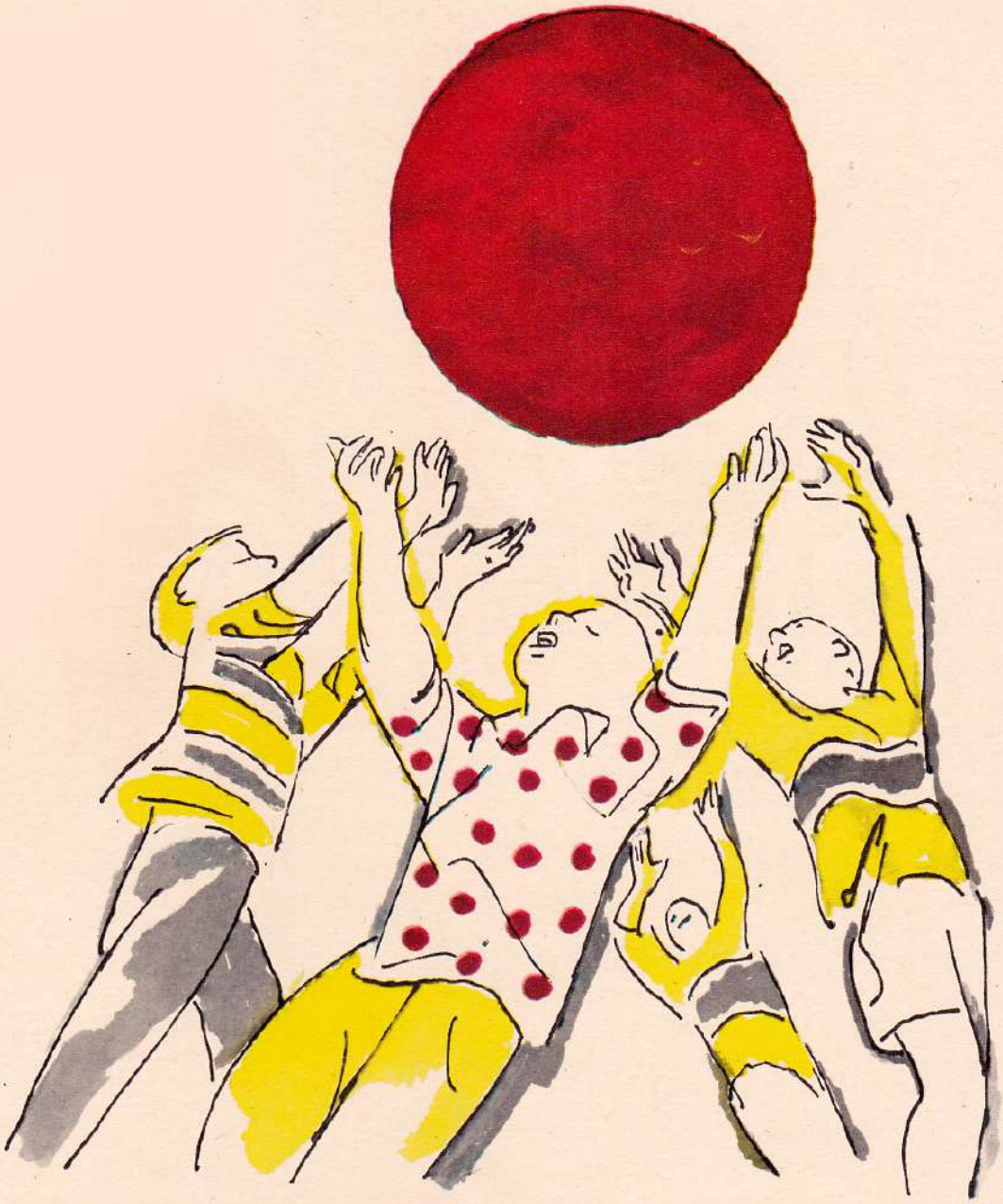
Lida counts aloud while skipping,
And she does her best, it's true,
But in fact she has not counted
Any more than up to two.

Lida asks her grandmother
To turn the rope a while:
Just a bit more exercise
And then she'll skip a mile.

"Now, my darling," Granny says,
"I think we'd better stop,
Or else the plaster down below
Will soon begin to drop."

It's spring, it's spring-time in the street,
Spring days have come at last!
The rooks are cawing in the trees,
The lorries rumble past.

Alive with noisy merriment
Our Moscow is today.
The leaves on trees aren't dusty yet,
But sticky, fresh, and gay.
Lida takes the rope once more
As she did the day before.
"Lida, Lida, look at Lida!"
Cry the other little girls,
"Look how good she is at skipping!"
"Look how fast the rope she twirls!"

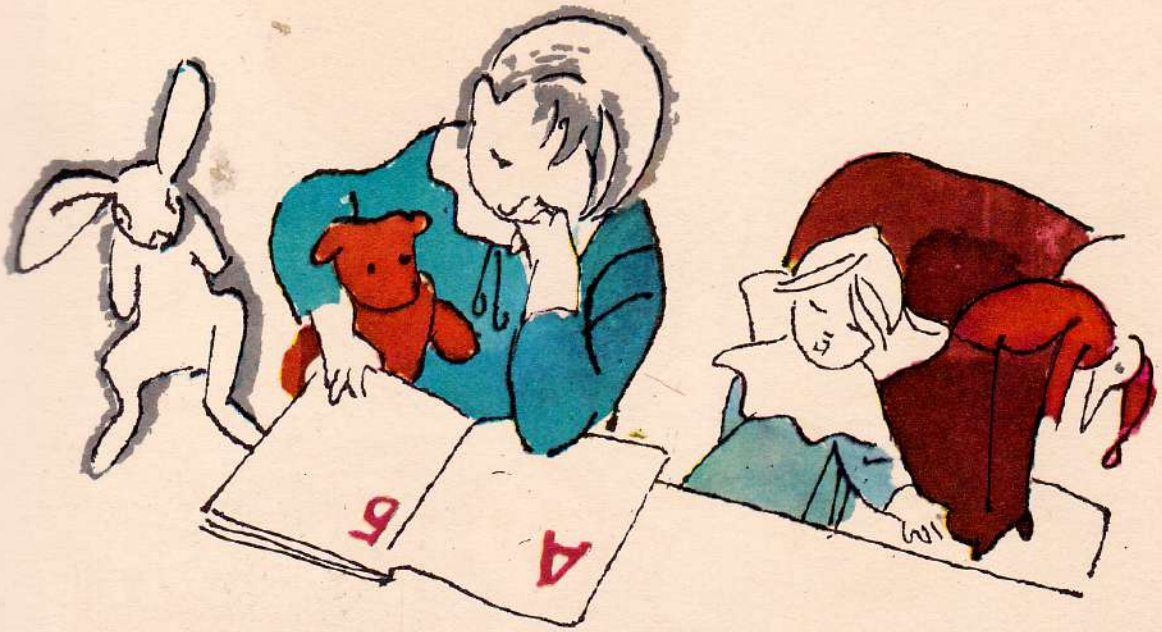


It's spring, the spring has come at last,
The spring is in the air!
The elder boys and girls to school
Are going everywhere.

With children's noisy gaiety
Ring garden, yard and park;
So skip, my Lida, all you like,
Be merry as a lark!

Translated by
Dorian Rottenberg

I'M A BIG GIRL NOW



Now with toys I cannot bother:
I'm learning how to read!
So I'll give them to my brother—
He shall have them—yes, indeed!

Not my wooden tea-things, though—
No, not yet, they're new, you know.
And although my Bunny's lame,
I shall keep him, just the same.

Teddy-Bear? His coat's too greasy.
He won't have my Dolly, for
He will pull her all to pieces,
Or he'll drop her on the floor.

Let him have my choo-choo, maybe?
It's too old to give away.
Then, although I am no baby,
I must also sometimes play.

Now with toys I cannot bother:
I am learning how to read.
But I shall not let my brother
Have a single one, indeed!

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff

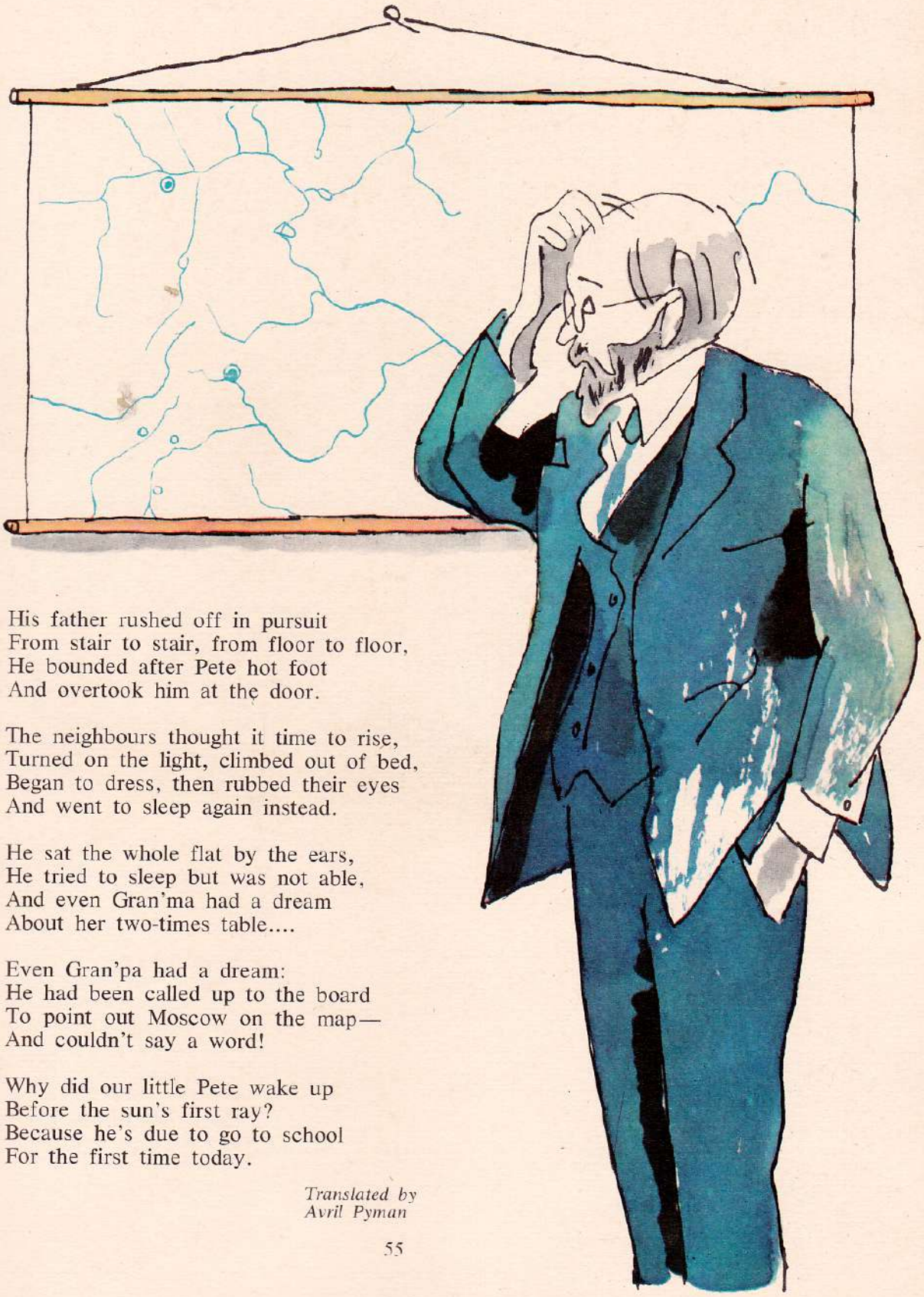
TO SCHOOL

Why did our little Pete wake up
Before the sun's first ray?
Because he's due to go to school
For the first time today.

He is a little boy no more.
He is a new-boy now.

He wears a smart new uniform
With the cap down on his brow.

He woke up in a dreadful fright
That the first lesson had begun.
Got up and dressed at dead of night
And off to school did run.



His father rushed off in pursuit
From stair to stair, from floor to floor,
He bounded after Pete hot foot
And overtook him at the door.

The neighbours thought it time to rise,
Turned on the light, climbed out of bed,
Began to dress, then rubbed their eyes
And went to sleep again instead.

He sat the whole flat by the ears,
He tried to sleep but was not able,
And even Gran'ma had a dream
About her two-times table....

Even Gran'pa had a dream:
He had been called up to the board
To point out Moscow on the map—
And couldn't say a word!

Why did our little Pete wake up
Before the sun's first ray?
Because he's due to go to school
For the first time today.

Translated by
Avril Pyman

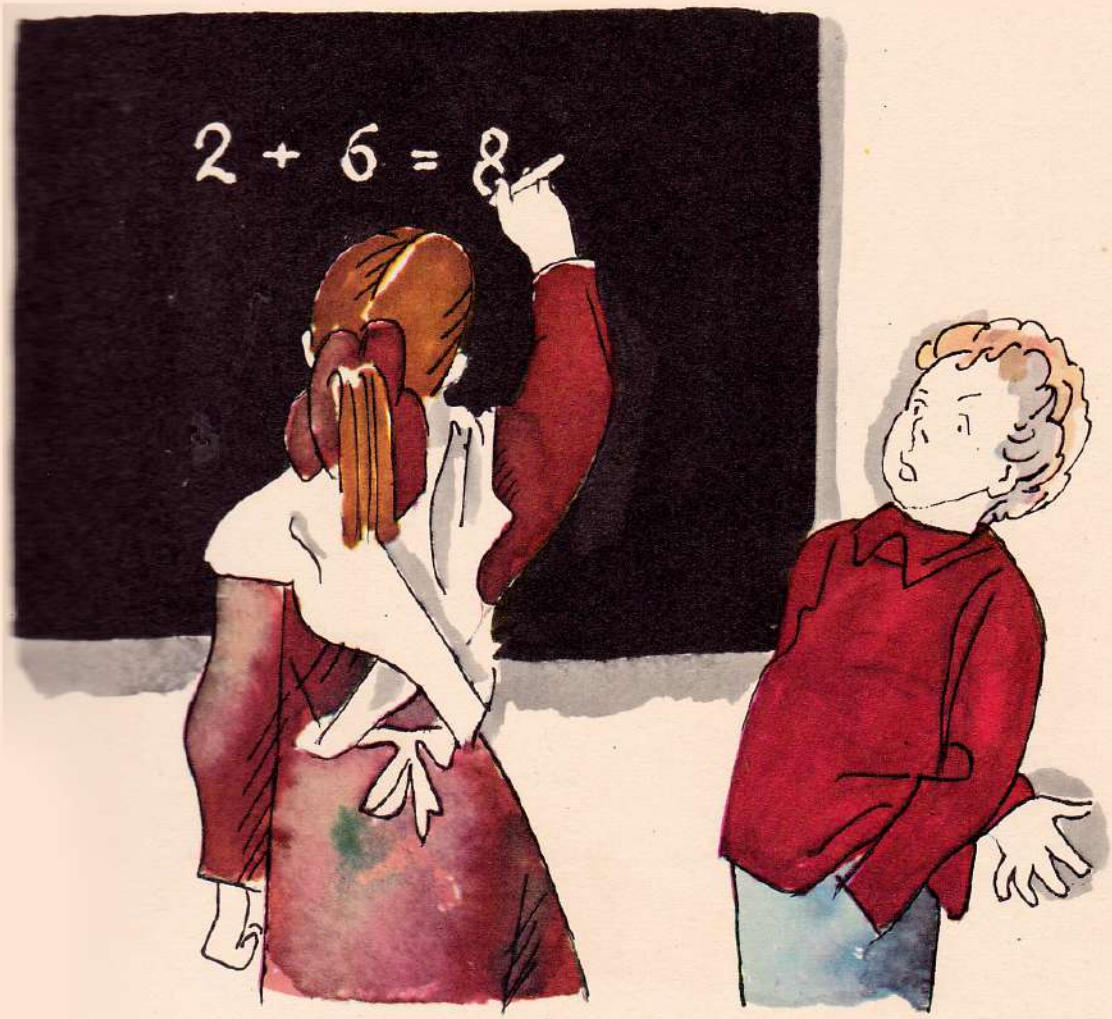
ARITHMETIC

Yura goes to school with Svétik
Who's six—and loves his arithmétic.

Once Yura had a sum to do.
He added carefully
And then informed us: "Six and two—
I think—make three."

Svétik, to help him from his fix,
Proud he could count eleven,
Said: "That's not right, for two plus six—
I think—makes seven!"

And so they argued hot and long,
Debating who was right, who wrong.



Her fingers bent back double,
Táya, the little fatty,
Shrieked: "Shush! I'm in a muddle,
Your counting drives me batty."

It's hard work adding two to six,
The worse the din, the worse the mix.

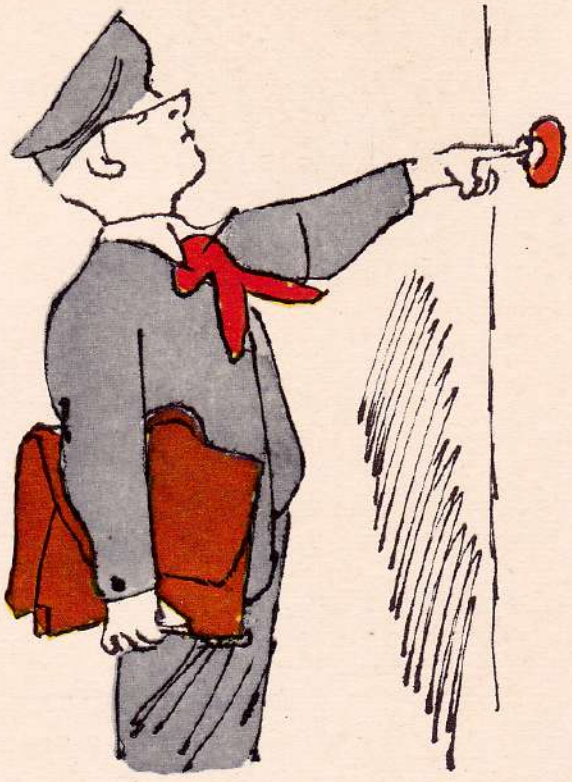
At last it was Nástya
Who came to the rescue.

Nástya was very clever,
She added six to two,
And answered (well, I never!),
"Eight"—just as *you* all knew!

Translated by
Avril Pyman

THE DOORBELL

I always know Volodya's marks
By how the doorbell chimes.
If it's "three"—a middling mark—
He rings three times.



When, suddenly, outside the door
A carillon of bells rings out,
That means he's earned a "five" or "four":
Top marks without a doubt.

If the mark is "two"—a bad thing—
Then I can tell from far away:
Two brief, hesitant and sad rings
Inform me how he's done today.

When it's "one", to spare us shock,
He doesn't ring—but gives a knock.

Translated by
Avril Pyman

THE CROQUET PLAYERS

Every morning on the lawn,
With the first peep of the dawn,
Little boys begin to play,
Tiffing all the livelong day.

Maybe, it's a hoop a-falling,
Or Andrei once more a-brawling.

In the woods, I doubt if ever
You will hear them make such noise;
But those croquet players never
Hunt for nuts like other boys!
All the summer, they'll be found
Playing on the croquet ground.

Yet, today our croquet players
Are not shouting at their play;
Even quarrelsome Andrei
Whispers at his play today.

You will hardly hear a sound
When a hoop falls to the ground.

Now, the pioneer-leader
Came to watch them at their play;
Everything was as it should be,
Peace and harmony held sway.

"Now, at last, you are not tiffing;
You are friends at last, I see.
When the troop meets next, you'll tell us
How you reached such amity."

In surprise, the players all
Let their croquet mallets fall.

And, in whispers almost noiseless,
Answered, "That's because we're voiceless!
We've been shouting every day,
And our vocal cords gave way!"

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff

THE CHATTERBOX

I'm not a chatterbox—not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now!

Photo-club, and mathematics,
Singing circle and dramatics;
Then, besides, I am a member
Of the drawing-club, remember.

Yesterday, our teacher said,
As at me she wagged her head,
"Photo-club, dramatics, dear,
That's a bit too much, I fear.
Choose one circle, girl, and you
Will have quite enough to do."

So, I chose photography....
But I love to sing, you see;
And, besides, I am a member
Of the drawing-club, remember.

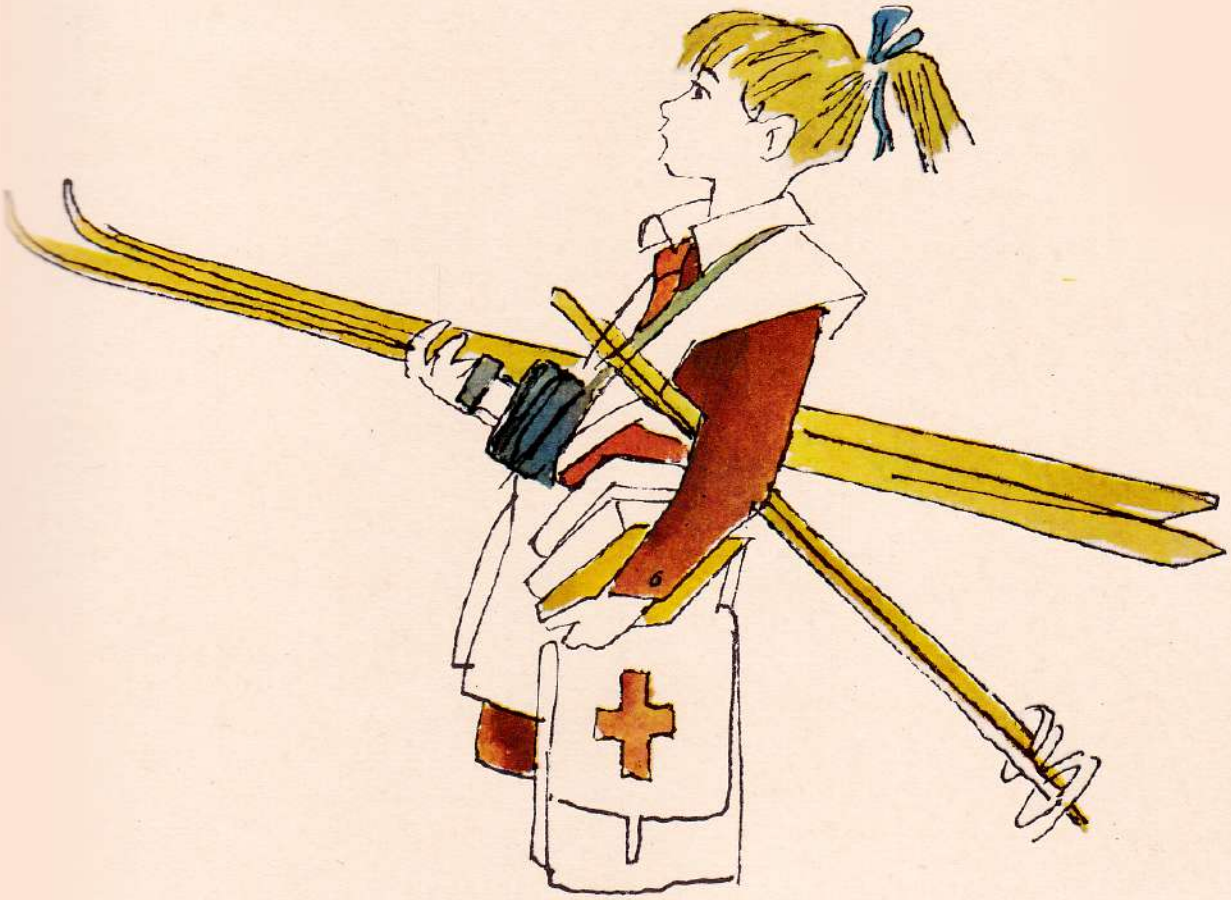
I'm no chatterbox—not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now!
Then I've extra tasks to do:
German—one, and Russian—two.

Home-work leaves no time for
play—
Verbs to learn, and sums to do....
From my window yesterday,
I saw a little boy I knew.

"Lida, come and play with me.
Here's a sweet for you," said he.
"I've got tasks," I said, "to do:
German—one, and Russian—two."

I'm no chatterbox—not I!
Little Vova spread that lie.
Chatter? I've no time, so how
Can I chatter, tell me, now?

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff



AUNTIE'S COUNTRY-HOUSE

"What luck!" said Auntie
In great exultation,
"We've rented a country-house
Quite near the station;
Near a wood of shady trees,
As for berries—all you please!
Just ten minutes from the station,
You can reach our house with ease.
There the scenery's a pleasure!
And our garden is a treasure!"
Auntie Olya then invited
Papa, Mamma, and me, too.
Auntie said to us, excited:
"Stay the week-end with us, do!
I'll explain where we live, so
You will know just where to go.

When you pass the station fences,
Where a narrow ditch commences
At the station, to the right—
Walk until you come in sight
Of a watch-tower and a paling.
After that, it's all plain sailing!
Do not leave the path, and it
Soon will lead you to a pit;
Then it breaks off short, just where you
See a water-well, and there you
Climb the hillock, and you'll see
Where we live—House Forty-Three!"

Auntie looked at me and said,
"Bring him, too," and stroked my head.
"He will not be in your way.
Let him breathe fresh air all day."

First, we walked on straight ahead.
"No, not this way," Mama said.
"From the station, to the right.
There a ditch should be in sight."
At the turning, all we found
Was a marshy strip of ground.
Round the forest fringe we blundered,
Climbed a little hill, and we
Met a woman—and she wondered
When we asked for Forty-Three.
"Why, that's somewhere near the station!"
Was the woman's explanation.

As in spite, rain started
drizzling;
Daddy, angry, started
fizzling:
"Where is your umbrella? I
Warned you—look now
at the sky!"

So we waited in the rain
Till the weather cleared again.
I was drenched from head
to toe,

Not a step more could I go.
So we dragged back to the station,
Got into a homebound
train.

And I've lost all inclination
To go visiting again.
I'll thank Auntie in a letter,
But I'll tell her, home is better!

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff

THE SWINGS

The green rustling leaves
In the soft breeze were playing;
The swings on the oak-tree
Were swinging and swaying.

From breakfast till lunch,
Till the rest-bell went ringing,
The kids of the First Class
Kept swinging and swinging.

The turn of the Third Class
And Sixth Class came then,
And next came the turn
Of the First Class again.

Now upwards, now downwards
The swings go a-flying,
And troop-leader Klava
Looks on, deeply sighing.

She says that she really
Cannot comprehend
How people can swing so
For hours without end.

Upwards, and downwards,
And up to the sky....
One's head can grow dizzy
From swinging so high!

After each kiddy
Was well tucked in bed,
Off to the swings,
In the park, Klava sped.
Klava's at peace:
Fast asleep is each kiddy;
She, if she pleases,
Can swing till she's giddy.

Anna Petrovna,
The troop-leaders' chief,
Called Klava that evening
And said, "Now, look here!

Your troop is undisciplined
Past all belief!
Don't waste so much time
On the swings, Klava dear."

As soon as the leaders
Were all gone to bed,

Anna Petrovna
Towards the oak sped.
She's in the Tenth Class,
And very well may
Play on the swings
Till the end of the day.

The evening is lovely—
Indoors it's so stifling!—
Aunt Mary strolled out
In the park, where it's cool.
Aunt Mary's our nurse,
And with *her,* there's no trifling,
For this year she finished
The medical school.

She came up to Anna
Petrovna, and read
A lecture to her.
"On vacation," she said,
"Take care of your health.
Now relax—go to bed!"

Anna blushed red
At her nurse's
Stern lecture, and went
Off to bed, with a sigh.

Aunt Mary.... She's swinging.
The evening breeze whispers,
The swings, they are winging
Up, up, to the sky.

Translated by
Lois Zelikoff

The Bad Little Bear-Cub

A Story for Children,
Young and Old

DRAWINGS BY M. MITURICH

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Mrs. Bruin had a son,
One I'd wish to anyone:
Like his mother to a hair,
Every inch of him a bear.

From the heat beneath a tree
Mother Bear would hide,
And sure enough young Sonny Bear
Would huddle by her side.

He'd trip up on a root, he would.
"Poor dear," crooned Mother Bear.
Indeed, my friends, in all the wood
No finer cub was there.

Yet Mrs. Bruin's young sonny
Broke all the rules and laws.
One day he found some honey
And ate with dirty paws!

His mother scolded:
"Naughty brat,
You mustn't grab
Your food like that!"
But Master Bear just gobbled on
And choked,
And coughed,
And spat.

His face became all clammy,
His fur began to stick—
A good day's work for Mammy
To clean, and smooth, and lick.

When Mum and Dad sat down to chat
He'd start a noisy squawking.
Now, ought a cub behave like that
When grown-up bears are talking?

The bear-cub, coming home one day,
Climbed first into the lair,
And that instead of giving way
To another, older bear.

The other day he stayed away
Till dark, the dreadful lad,
And came with fur all full of hay,
A sight to make one mad.

He said without a trace of shame:
"We had a lovely, lovely game."
Says Ma: "His manners made me weep.
He roars all night, won't let us sleep."

He'll drive his mother crazy.
    It's much too much to bear.
They went to see Aunt Maisie.
    The same old story there:
He bit his Auntie on the knee
    And shoved his cousins off a tree.

All that week his mother fretted
And her pampering regretted.
    "Oh dear me, I've spoiled the child:
    Now he's simply running wild!"

She went and asked her husband,
    (As if he really knew!)
"Our son is getting worse and worse.
    Please tell me what to do."

"He doesn't know what's right or wrong.
He's robbing birds' nests all along.
    He's always making faces,
    He fights in public places!"

Bruin answered with a roar,
    "Why am I to blame?
What *is* a bear-cub's mother for
    If *she* can't make him tame?

"The rascal's got a mother,
And she's the one to bother."
But soon the culprit got so bad
He raised his paw against his Dad.
    Just think of it—a cub should dare
    To snap and snarl at Father Bear!
The father with an angry grunt
    Picked up a hefty stick.
(It seemed, his off-spring's latest stunt
    Had cut him to the quick!)

Here Mother started whimpering:
"Oh, I can't bear the sight!
Why, it's an outrage, honestly,
Threshing such a mite!"

While quarrels
Tore the family
The son grew up
Unmannerly.

Though odd this tale may seem to you,
I've often heard it said
That sometimes among children, too,
Such little bears are met.

Translated by
Dorian Rottenberg

А. Барто. Веселые стихи.
На английском языке

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